

A WEEKLY INFORMATION DIGEST

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Executive Committee Meets in Geneva

Relations between the World Council of Churches and the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the future of the refugee resettlement program of the WCC are two of the topics on the agenda of the Council's Executive Committee which meets in Geneva, Switzerland, Monday, Feb. 4, through Friday, Feb. 8.

American churchmen to attend the week-long meeting of the Committee include: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the United Lutheran Church and chairman of both the W.C.C. Central and Executive Committees; Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, president of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.; Dr. Liston Pope, dean of Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., all members of the Central Committee. In addition Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, World Council of Churches executive secretary in the U.S.A., and Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, associate general secretary of the Council and director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, will be present.

During the meeting, the first of the Executive group since the 90-member Central Committee of the World Council met in Galyateto, Hungary, last August, the Council's actions and policy will be fully reviewed. The Executive Committee holds summer and winter meetings each year. It is elected by the Central Committee, the larger body that carries out World Council decisions made by the Assemblies which meet every six years.

The 12-member Executive Committee's agenda includes discussion of the General Secretary's report covering activity during the recent international emergencies, the report of the officers of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs on their work at the General Assembly of the United Nations. Possibilities for theme and arrangements in connection with the W.C.C.'s third Assembly set down for 1960 "somewhere in Asia"; themes and planning for the next meeting of the W.C.C.'s Central Committee, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., July 30 - August 7, 1957, and progress of proposals for integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council by 1960 will be discussed. Review and preview of work among Hungarian refugees and the future of the W.C.C.'s refugee resettlement program; building plans for new headquarters to be erected in Geneva are also topics on the agenda.

Members of the Committee in addition to the Americans named expected to attend include: World Council honorary president, the Right Reverend G.K.A. Bell, Bishop of Chichester, Anglican; Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, Methodist, Brazil (W.C.C. president); Dr. Ernest A. Payne, Baptist, UK, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee; Dr. Kathleen Bliss, Anglican, UK; Professor Joseph Hromadka, Czech Brethren, Czechoslovakia; Metropolitan James of Philadelphia, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Turkey; and Dr. Martin Niemoeller, Evangelical Church in Germany. Sir Kenneth Grubb, Chairman of the CCIA, London, and Dr. Norman Goodall, also of London, Secretary to the Joint Committee of the International Missionary Council and the W.C.C. are also expected.

E.P.S., Geneva

HUNGARY

Visit to Hungary for Lutheran World Federation Officials

Two Lutheran World Federation officials with permission to enter Hungary left Vienna, Austria, for Budapest on January 30 for a five-day visit. Making the trip are LWF Executive secretary Carl E. Lund-Quist and the Rev. Mogens Zeuthen, LWF secretary for minority Lutheran churches. Pastor Zeuthen, a Dane, speaks Hungarian and will act as interpreter.

There is a possibility that he will stay on longer in Budapest for further discussion.

"The Lutheran World Federation is thankful that we have the opportunity for personal conversations in the present situation of the Church in Hungary," Dr. Lund-Quist said. The two men will talk with church and government officials about the situation of the Church and the distribution of Protestant contributed relief goods. They also plan to visit Hungarian Lutheran Bishop Lajos Ordass, who expressed joy at their coming when notified by telephone on January 23.

Dr. Lund-Quist had a telegram in December from the State Office of Church Affairs saying he would be welcome in Budapest. E.P.S., Geneva

YMCA World Alliance Delegation Back from China

(Geneva) - A delegation from the World Alliance of YMCAs, recently returned from a one-month visit to China, reports that 25 YMCAs are at work, carrying out religious, educational, cultural and physical education activities.

The three-man delegation visited Peking, Tientsin, Nanking, Shanghai, Hangchow and Canton. Though they spent most of their time studying the YMCAs and the churches, they also visited several schools and industries and met political and youth leaders. The group talked with the faculties of the theological seminaries in Peking, Nanking and Canton and preached in Shanghai churches.

Dr. Y.C. Tu, general secretary of the national committee and a national staff member, and all general secretaries of local associations which the delegation met, are persons who were active in YMCA work before 1949.

Altogether there are between 700,000 and 800,000 members in the Protestant churches in China, while about 3 million Chinese belong to the Roman Catholic Church. The general secretary, Günther Feuser, described the close collaboration between the YMCA and the established church. This collaboration went so far that the YMCA secretaries attended the theological seminaries run by the Church, and all their mission work was planned together. Günther Feuser emphasized the fact that after a long period of isolation (which may not have been its own choice) the Chinese Church was seeking contact with Christians in the West. Feuser said he was certain that the Chinese YMCA wants to resume its collaboration with the World Alliance of YMCAs.

David Robinson, a vice-president of the World Alliance; Günther Feuser, Germany, secretary for refugee work for the German YMCA and general secretary of the German national committee; and Tore Littmarck, Sweden, on the World Alliance staff in Geneva, made the trip.

A YMCA delegation from China has also visited the Indian YMCA movement recently and a return visit is planned. E.P.S., Geneva

Scriptures for Hungarian Refugees

Hungarian refugees will receive a copy of the Scriptures in their own language in the country where they settle. The United Bible Societies in London have announced that all the Bible Societies in countries where Hungarians are being received have arranged to provide the Bibles. Several societies are giving money to produce the Scriptures in countries where the Bible societies are not self-supporting.

Fifty thousand copies of the Gospel of John have been printed in Switzerland and are now available, and 100,000 copies of Luke will be ready by the middle of February. Twenty thousand Bibles and 30,000 New Testaments, printed in Holland, and 5,000 Bibles and 20,000 New Testaments printed in Great Britain will be ready by the end of February.

The Bible societies in each country will see that available supplies are distributed equitably. E.P.S., Geneva

DENMARK

Invitation to Russian Churches Deferred

The Danish Lutheran bishops have decided to postpone inviting a Russian church delegation to visit Denmark, "in view of the circumstances" in Hungary.

In a joint personal letter to the Patriarch of Moscow, Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard, Copenhagen, and Bishop Erik Jensen, Alborg, appealed to him "in the name of Christ to make his great spiritual influence felt in order to safeguard the freedom of the Hungarian people and bring about a just peace and put an end to the sufferings of the nation." So far there has been no direct answer from the Patriarch. Both Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard and Bishop Jensen took part in the Danish Church delegation's visit to Moscow a year ago.

Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard, in an interview with Kristeligt Dagblad, pointed out that he was "well aware that the events of the past few months have made it almost inhumanly difficult to maintain contact across the Iron Curtain. But," he continued, "I feel that we should very carefully consider the new situation and try to decide what is most right in the long run." The bishop answered critics of the Danish visit to Russia by saying, "It was right that the visit took place. The Russian Church is able to survive only if it has the necessary spiritual strength and therefore we must keep on praying for it and not give up our fellowship with it."

Asked if he did not think it possible for a church to identify itself so closely with a godless regime that it would be unreasonable to maintain contact with it, the bishop answered, "Yes, but I do not feel that this is the case with the Russian Church." E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED KINGDOM

Fund Raised for Arrested South Africans

A special fund established by the organization Christian Action, to provide legal defense of the more than 150 persons arrested for treason in South Africa, has passed the £2,000 mark. The goal of the fund, which will also be used to aid the families of the accused men, is £10,000. Reports from South Africa say that the men arrested in Port Elizabeth have lost their jobs, including one man who had held the same position for 17 years. E.P.S., Geneva

KENYA

Anglican Bishop Strongly Supports Interracial Partnership

In a sermon preached on January 13 in All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi, Kenya, the Anglican Bishop of Mombasa stressed the need for encouraging progress towards partnership and community. The Rt. Rev. L. J. Beecher said that the church had no intention of supporting suggestions that such progress should be controlled or even impeded.

"Any member of the church in this diocese who suggests or acts to the contrary will receive no support from me," he said.

As far as the church in the diocese of Mombasa was concerned, the bishop said he intended to pursue a policy aimed at showing the Church of Christ as the true family of God in a world where accidental and purely superficial distinction and differences were no longer held to be significant. E.P.S., Geneva

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Widely Celebrated

Reports from many countries indicate widespread observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25 (see EPS No. 45, 1956). The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic group around Father P. Michalon in the city of Lyons have distributed literature to a greater public than in any previous year.

In Switzerland the Evangelical Women's Community of Grandchamp in the Canton of Neuchâtel prepared the week by a series of ecumenical discussions on "Schism as an Ecclesiastical and Spiritual Problem". The sessions, held from January 7-10, were attended by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians from several countries. The seventy participants, some of whom were laymen, joined in the liturgical offices of the community.

Ecumenical services were held in the Cathedral of St. Pierre in Geneva, in Neuchâtel, Bienne, La Chaux-de-Fonds and St. Imier. In Zurich Professor Oscar Cullman of Bâle delivered an address on "Primitive Christianity and the Ecumenical Question". He recalled the inter-church aid rendered by the New Testament churches to the poor in Jerusalem and suggested an annual collection in Protestant churches for the poor in Catholic churches and vice versa.

At a Roman Catholic service in Geneva a Dominican, Father de Riedmatten, said that in the week of prayer when Christians of Geneva had been invited to pray for Christian unity it had to be said that they were called to do much more than this. "To convey truth by love and recognize love in our brethren is true ecumenism," he said. It is almost too fine to be expected. It borders on the danger of utopianism, but all the same it is the truth."

In the United Kingdom special services were held throughout the country. Anglicans and Methodists sang Evensong together in the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street, London. Prayers were said in Christ Church, Anglican Cathedral at Oxford, every day except Thursday, when they were held in the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy. A public meeting on "Catholicism and Unity" took place at Cambridge and was addressed by Anglican, Orthodox and Methodist speakers. The BBC and independent television arranged special programs.

At a meeting in St. Pancras Town Hall, London, the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. H. J. Carpenter, presided over a meeting addressed by Anglican, Roman Catholic, Congregationalist and Greek Orthodox speakers. Father Bernard Leeming of the Society of Jesus told the audience that "the ecumenical movement had been subject to criticism by almost every denomination. Nevertheless it was a movement notable in Christian history. It indicates a desire for unity which did not exist fifty years ago." Father Leeming quoted with appreciation the modest words of an Anglican concerned with that movement, Canon Oliver Tomkins, "It exists in order to be dissolved."

In France, Pastor Marc Boegner, president of the French Protestant Federation, in a front page article for the weekly Christianisme au XXe Siècle introduced the many regional and local observances throughout the country by saying: "It cannot be denied that very many Catholics who pray for unity cannot imagine it except in terms of the return of their separated brethren to the Roman Catholic Church. But then it is no less certain that unity as found in the intercession of many Protestants takes on a colour that it would be difficult to regard as truly ecumenical." Alas, poor Christians that we are, we all have the utmost difficulty in purifying our intercessions from our prejudices, our misunderstandings, our narrowness and our one-sidedness."

The celebration of the week as an Octave or Prayer for the return of non-Roman Catholics to the Holy See continues in the Roman Catholic Church alongside the movement of the late Abbé Paul Couturier which prays for unity according to Christ's will without specifying what that unity is.

"Being united in prayer makes us all reflect," writes the service of the International Catholic Press Agency KIPA, issued in Switzerland, in an article on the Octave of Prayer. "It makes us reflect on the sad reality of our divisions, the decisive need for unity, the causes and effects of divisions, and the one truth which is indivisible." The present-day division of Christendom is a "disastrous fact," the article continues; the Asian countries which are just reaching maturity and which are still almost completely pagan, cannot possibly perceive "the great sign of Christendom" in such a situation; or if they do perceive it, they cannot see any sign of unity, much less any active unity." Despite the "stumbling blocks" which Protestants find difficult to accept in the Catholic Church - such as the primacy of Peter and of the Pope and the appeal to "return" to Rome - Catholics and Protestants have drawn considerably nearer to one another. "The opposing fronts have been broken up, the discussion has begun. There is a large measure of cooperation in social, cultural and charitable work." E.P.S., Geneva

Current Work in the Division of Studies

From time to time EPS will give details about developments in the divisions and departments of the World Council of Churches

Varied projects, including a biblical study on the world and the church under the Lordship of Christ; a discussion of the question, "Does church unity require all Christians to worship the same way?"; and a three-year study of Christian responsibility in areas of rapid social change, are some of the chief concerns of the Division of Studies.

A rapid survey of the division shows:

Director Robert S. Bilheimer leaves on February 10 for a three-month trip to West Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia. The purpose: to investigate ethical

problems involved in technical assistance and development problems and to promote the theological study on the Lordship of Christ. He will also attend a conference in Siantar on rapid social change and a conference of the churches of South East Asia in Prapat, Indonesia.

The executive secretary of the Department on Church and Society, the Rev. Paul R. Abrecht, leaves on February 7 for an eight-weeks' trip to Africa to help develop projects related to the current study on the Christian responsibility toward areas of rapid social change. He will stop in Ethiopia, Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, the Cameroons, the Republic of Togo and the Gold Coast. In Northern Rhodesia, the Cameroons and Togo, Mr. Abrecht will be accompanied by the Rev. John Karefa-Smart of Freetown, Sierra Leone, the consultant in Africa for the rapid social change program. The WCC study is being developed in five areas of Africa: the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, the Union of South Africa, the Cameroons, the Gold Coast and Liberia. A project is being considered for Kenya.

Papers on the theme, "The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church" are being prepared by scholars. The study was authorized in 1955. The division held a study conference last summer to outline the purpose. The group declared, "The ecumenical movement cannot grow and deepen unless intensive biblical and theological work is undertaken at each major point in the common life of the churches."

A study on the "Life and Work of the Younger Churches in Uganda", based on several months research in Uganda, is nearly complete.

Twenty-five thousand leaflets were distributed this year to aid in the observance of the rapidly-growing Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25. Promotion of the week is one of the projects of the division's Department on Faith and Order.

The Rt. Rev. Kenneth Riches, the Bishop of Lincoln, has been named as chairman of the Faith and Order Department's Theological Commission on Worship for Europe. The bishop will lead the group of European theologians in the second stage on Christian worship and ways in which obstacles in worship causing divisions in the church may be overcome.

The results of the first stage of the study, begun in 1939 by the Faith and Order Movement, are summed up in the book Ways of Worship, published in 1952. Bishop Riches has been a representative of the Church of England on the Faith and Order Commission for the last 10 years.

The bulletin of the division, begun two years ago, has a current circulation of 2,200 and appears twice a year in French, German and English.

In the study of the problems of rapid social change attention is constantly being given to the theological foundations of the study. Currently six documents about the study have been issued, and a preliminary report is expected to be ready for the Central Committee at its meeting in August 1958.

E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

About forty Russian Bibles a week are going to refugees in Manchuria from the Hong Kong office of the World Council of Churches. The Bibles, which have been sent for about a year, are always promptly acknowledged by the persons receiving them, says Director Lilli Neugebauer of the WCC office in Hong Kong. According to reports from China, many Bibles are sent on to Russia.

Syria has honored the Rev. Bengt Hoffman, director of the Lutheran World Federation's Department of World Service, with its highest Order of Merit. The award, in recognition of LWF work among Palestinian refugees, was presented on January 19 in Damascus. At the same ceremony, Chris Christiansen, LWF senior representative in the Middle East, and William Steinhausen, LWF director in Syria, received the Syrian Order of Merit, Grade I.

The Rev. Cecilio Arristia, young Cuban evangelist, has been named to lead an evangelism program throughout Latin America, sponsored by the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Under the program, Mr. Arristia will preach and train other evangelists in nearly all of Spanish-speaking Central and South America and the Caribbean area.
